

Lesson Four: Describe Your Project and Methods

This is a critical section, because a poor program design will sink your proposal. If you are developing a new project, then writing this section carefully is the most important use of your time. You will need to include *all* the details involved in creating a project from the ground up. Your project must be well thought-out, realistic, and often collaborative, among your organization's departments and sometimes with outside organizations as well. (You will learn more about collaborations in the next lesson.)

Know the terminology

As you develop your proposal, you will be asked to define your organization's mission, goals, and objectives, and often to provide detailed information on the inputs, activities, and outcomes for your project. Some organizations also have a "vision statement." It is important to be clear on what each of these terms means. However, as you read and respond to different funders' guidelines, you may find a lot of discrepancies in terminology.

We offer the following definitions to help keep you on track, especially when a specific funder does not offer a clear set of guidelines.

A Mission Statement is an idealistic and concise statement of why the NPO exists.

A Mission Statement expresses three elements: business, purpose, and values, though one or more of these may be implied. In other words, why does the organization exist, what is its aim, and by what principles does it operate? The mission is not measurable, nor does it tell *how* the organization is going to accomplish the mission. It should be both succinct and lofty, so that it is memorable and inspiring. For example:

***Womankind's Financial Literacy Project** helps women become financially literate and economically self-sufficient.*

***Bleeker College** seeks to advance the theory and practice of learning, and to nurture and prepare young minds for today's diverse and ever-changing world.*

*The mission of the **Shangri-La Senior Service Center** is to improve the lives and well-being of elders in our community.*

A **Goal** is a broad-based statement of the ultimate result of the change being undertaken.

There are no descriptions of *how* the NPO is going to accomplish the goal in the goal statement, just as a good mission statement for the organization does not state *how* the organization will accomplish its mission. Here are three examples of goals:

Encourage women to take responsibility for their own financial well-being and self sufficiency. (Womankind's Financial Literacy Project)

Entering freshman will be better prepared to learn and to participate in college life. (Bleeker College Fresh Start Program)

The homebound elderly in Shangri-La County will live with dignity and independence in their own homes. (Shangri-La Senior Service Center)

As you can see, these goals do not include *how* the goal is going to be met, unlike objectives, which do.

An **Objective** is a measurable, time-specific result that the organization expects to accomplish.

Objectives are much more narrowly defined than goals, and should show some sort of movement as a result of your activities. An objective can be stated as “who” will do “what” by “when.” You may have several objectives to address each of your goals. Using the first goal just cited, here are four potential relevant objectives:

Goal: Encourage women to take responsibility for their own financial well-being and self sufficiency. (Womankind's Financial Literacy Project)

Objective 1: With input from financial professionals, members, and the Board, Womankind staff will create the curriculum for a six-week, introductory Financial Literacy course by January 1, 2011.

Objective 2: The Training Coordinator will train at least two new Financial Literacy Course Facilitators by February 15, 2011.

Objective 3: Womankind instructors will offer the first Financial Literacy Course for 20 women, beginning April, 2011.

Objective 4: The Executive Director will fill all six 2011 classes by December 31.

To clarify:

- Goals are lofty intentions; objectives are exact.
- Goals are intangible; objectives are tangible.
- Goals are broad; objectives are focused.
- Goals cannot be measured; objectives can be measured.

Well-conceived and well-written goals and objectives should:

- Tie directly to the case statement.
- Include all relevant parties in the target population.
- Allow plenty of time to accomplish the objectives, and
- Be specific enough that they can be measured (evaluated).

If there is no way to measure change, you are either describing a goal, or you will need to rethink the objective you are trying to state. Objectives do not describe methods and the many tasks by which you are going to accomplish the objective. They should describe a result.

In the example above, evidence that the first objective was accomplished would be the written curriculum documents. Evidence that the second objective was met could include a test taken by the new facilitators showing that they learned the training materials.

There are several different ways to categorize objectives. In human services, for example, objectives often measure knowledge (changes in learning or skills), attitude (changes in opinion and approach) and behavior (changes in ability or performance).

► **Exercise:**

Write or review the goals and objectives for your program or project. Do they meet the criteria defined here? Are they short, clear, and to the point? Are the objectives specific and measurable? If yes, proceed. If not, keep revising the goals and objectives until they meet the definitions provided here.